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The Director and His Eminence: The Working Relationship and Questions of Church and State as Reflected in Cardinal Cushing's FBI Files

James F. Garneau

Abstract

The public and personal relationship of Richard James Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston (1944-1970), and J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI's long-time director, as seen through the pages of the FBI file on the cardinal, gives ample witness to the unique form of "Americanism" common to the post-World War II era in America. It was characterized by a deep commitment to American democratic ideals, a vociferous anticommunism, and a broadly understood "practical ecumenism." The documents in this file also point to the warm, mutual, personal, and political support that existed between these two nationally known figures. The level of cooperation, though not surprising in light of their anticommunism and shared vision of America, does evidence a significant, and for many, perhaps, surprising history of cooperation between these governmental and church leaders. There is clear evidence of the influence of Cushing and other members of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy within sectors of the government during this period and of the support of certain governmental officials and agencies for selected projects of the Church and her leaders. All of this suggests that Paul Blanshard, Harold Fey, Joseph Dawson, and others, and groups such as Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU), who criticized and denounced such influence and the perceived menace of Catholic power, may have been more correct in their assessment of the situation than either Cushing or Hoover were willing to admit at the time.

J. Edgar Hoover and Richard Cardinal Cushing both shared a common vision of America. That vision led to a significant degree of collaboration between two of the most influential men in America during the height of the Cold War. Their collaboration on ecclesiastical as well as political fronts might constitute a surprise to those who would be convinced that a constant in American civil life has been the separation of church and state. It was made possible by a certain kind of mid-century Americanism, largely born of a national commitment

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to the ideology of democracy in the face of fascism and of the anti-communism of the post-World War II era. It also coincided with, and was perhaps nurtured by, one of the greatest "religious awakenings" in American history, that which began almost as soon as the Second World War ended, and continued with varying intensity and manifestations, until the end of the 1950s.¹

The extent of the collaboration between Hoover and Cushing, if known at the time, would have given new fuel to the charges of over-reaching Catholic power and influence in governmental and political affairs.² Their friendship and cooperation were indicative of a kind of practical ecumenism that existed in the United States in the years just prior to the Second Vatican Council. Perhaps surprisingly, this form of interfaith cooperation enabled a major Catholic hierarchy to cooperate with the religious agenda of a leading Mason and, at the same time, made many U.S. Catholics feel very proud. In 1955, Will Herberg provided a framework for understanding this form of Americanism, with its easy ecumenism, in his well-known theological critique, describing it as "secularism within a religious framework."³

Though both Cushing and Hoover were born in 1895, the settings were notably different. The one was born in South Boston, the son of

1. See Robert S. Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); J. Ronald Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (New York: December, 1986); Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Stephen Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); and Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950's* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), esp. 13-45. James Hennesey, S.J., called the period "American Religion's Indian Summer," in *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 284. Paul Blanshard, *God and Man in Washington* (Boston: Beacon, 1960), 15, cited a 1958 Gallup Poll, which indicated that nearly half of the U.S. adult population attended church or synagogue in a sample week. It is generally held by scholars that U.S. church membership, which according to polls surpassed the 60% mark in the mid-1950s, had never been so high (nor has it been since).

2. See Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon, 1949); idem, *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon, 1951); idem, *The Irish and Catholic Power: An American Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1953); idem, *God and Man in Washington*; W. Russell Bowie, "Protestant Concern Over Catholicism," *The American Mercury* 69 (September 1949), 261-273; Joseph Martin Dawson, *Separate Church and State Now* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1948); Harold E. Fey, "Can Catholicism Win America?" *The Christian Century*, n.d. (reprint of eight articles published November 29, 1944 - January 17, 1945); and Sidney Hook, *Reason, Social Myths and Democracy* (New York: John Day, 1940).

3. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), especially 284-288.

Irish, immigrant, Catholic, working-class parents. He went to Catholic schools, including Boston College and St. John's Seminary, Brighton, and was ordained a priest in 1921, when he was twenty-five years old. He was assigned to parish work as a curate. The other was born in the shadow of the nation's Capitol, the son of a middle-class, Protestant family. After a brief time as a Lutheran, he joined the Presbyterian Church; he eventually became a thirty-third-degree Mason. He attended public schools and graduated from George Washington University Law School. He had taken classes at night while working at the Library of Congress during the day. After obtaining a law degree, he secured a job as a clerk in the files division of the Justice Department at the age of twenty-two.

Both men were quickly recognized by their superiors as possessors of special zeal and talents. Soon after his ordination, Richard James Cushing was appointed to the diocesan office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith by Cardinal William H. O'Connell, the Archbishop of Boston, and was made its director in 1928, at the age of thirty-two. John Edgar Hoover was made a special assistant to Attorney General Alexander M. Palmer in 1919, and was named the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1924, when he was only twenty-nine years old. Cushing was consecrated an auxiliary bishop in 1939, named Archbishop of Boston in 1944, and created a cardinal in 1958. He died at the age of seventy-five, on November 2, 1970, one month after his resignation as Boston's ordinary. Hoover died in office, on May 2, 1972, at the age of seventy-seven.⁴

Cushing and Hoover appear to have first met in Boston on September 27, 1952, at a testimonial dinner honoring Cushing. By that time, Hoover's name and reputation were known throughout the nation. Within a decade, Cushing's would be as well. They were already mutual admirers and soon became mutual public and private supporters. They called each other friends. Significant aspects of their relationship are made manifest in the files of the FBI. Cushing's file,

4. See John Henry Cutler, *Cardinal Cushing of Boston* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1970); Joseph Dever, *Cushing of Boston: A Candid Portrait* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1965); M. C. Devine, *The Life of Richard Cardinal Cushing* (Boston: St. Paul, 1964); and John H. Fenton, *Salt of the Earth: An Informal Portrait of Richard Cardinal Cushing* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965). All of these were written prior to Cushing's death. There has been, as yet, no scholarly biography of this influential man. There are several biographies of the now controversial long-term director of the FBI, including Athan G. Theoharis and John Stuart Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); and Athan G. Theoharis, *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995). Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Free Press, 1987) successfully strives to offer an objective assessment and less polemical work.

which contains just over eight hundred pages, includes letters exchanged between the two men, copies of many of Cushing's publications (e.g., pamphlets, pastoral letters, etc.), numerous newspaper clippings, and internal FBI memos from special agents assigned to monitor Cushing and report directly to Hoover.⁵

The first documents preserved in the files are an invitation from Boston College Law School and the Archbishop of Boston to attend the 1945 Red Mass in Boston, and a letter to Cushing, dated October 4, 1945, in which Hoover sends his regrets. The last documents included are notifications of Cushing's death, sent to Hoover by the FBI Boston office, and a subsequent internal memo, directing that the name of Richard Cardinal Cushing be deleted from the list of SAC contacts (i.e., "special agent in charge") in Boston.⁶ The fifty-three pages that are related in some way to the September 27, 1952 dinner at the Statler Hotel not only show the detailed planning and careful follow-up that attended such appearances by Hoover, but also indicate the themes and common interests that would create the grounds for the cooperation and friendship that developed between Cushing and Hoover over the next eighteen years.⁷

Before an audience of at least twelve hundred Knights of Columbus and other Catholic men, Cushing and Hoover sat at a three-tiered head table that included bishops, the ambassador of Spain, the Irish Consul in Boston, the U.S. Secretary of Labor, the governors of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the mayor of Boston, a U.S. senator, former Postmaster General James A. Farley, and Congressmen John McCormack, Thomas P. O'Neil, and John F. Kennedy. John J. Wright, Bishop of Worcester, on whom Hoover had been suitably briefed

5. The FBI released the file entitled "Richard J. Cushing" to the author on April 5, 2000, FOIPA No. 441429. It numbers 802 pages, and it was noted that the file included copies of several more pamphlets, not included, written by Cushing, that were available upon request. Moreover, it was noted that three pages in the file were not released. Citing section 552 of the Freedom of Information Act and section 552a of the Privacy Act, a reason for the denial of the release request was noted for each embargoed page: "personnel and medical files," "unwarranted invasion of personal privacy," and "could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source." The individual documents within the released file are not entirely in chronological order. In this paper they will be referenced by date. According to his nephew, a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston, interview with author, Cushing attempted to destroy his personal files before his death. Those few that remain are in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Boston (AAB) and include sixteen pieces of correspondence between the two men. I am grateful to Robert Johnson-Lally, the Archivist/Records Manager of the Archdiocese of Boston, for his assistance in researching these files.

6. FBI File, "Richard James Cushing," (RJC), memo, "To: Director," November 3, 1970; RJC, memo, "To: Director, FBI," November 6, 1970.

7. See RJC, July 30 through November 15, 1952.

beforehand, was seated at the director's right. Monsignor Jeremiah F. Minihan, the evening's toastmaster, the former secretary to William Cardinal O'Connell and the brother-in-law of an FBI agent, was on his left.⁸ In his prepared remarks, Hoover called the archbishop a "prince among princes" and a "champion of the underprivileged and down-trodden," citing his labors "for the advancement of the Kingdom of God." He also noted his efforts to "improve the democratic institutions of this nation," and praised him as a "crusader in arms" against the "heinous foe" of communism. He concluded his brief presentation by his salute to "one of God's great servants and one of the nation's outstanding citizens."⁹

The archbishop responded with typical exuberance. While calling attention to the opening of "Catholic Bible Week," he berated dictatorships and especially communism for their attack on the Fourth Commandment, which he cited as providing for the rights of parents to raise their own children without undue governmental interference. The same commandment and principle, he believed, was recognized by the U.S. Constitution, and upheld by the Supreme Court in the famous Oregon School Case, which he also cited. "Faith and freedom," he said, "are inseparable. The one is spiritual and religious; the other is political and legal. They cannot be torn asunder. If such an attempt were to succeed we should perish from the earth, and deservedly so. It must not. You and I will not permit it to do so." He noted that the evening's event was also meant to fund a \$4 million project "to educate children of all creeds and nationalities who are victims of broken homes." This last, he stated, and a lack of religious training were among "the root causes of crime."¹⁰

In acknowledging the presence of the FBI director, Cushing described him as "an inspiration to youth, a consolation to parents, a tower of strength, of hope and encouragement to all America as the inspired leader of an organization without spot or wrinkle." "He is," he

8. RJC, memo, "To: Director, From: SAC, Boston," September 27, 1952; Memo, "To: Director: FBI, From: SAC, Boston," September 27, 1952. Mr. Clyde Tolson, the associate director of the Bureau and Hoover's lifelong friend, also attended and was given a place at the head table. Fr. Christopher P. Griffin, who made the arrangements for the dinner, was told by Louis B. Nichols, who was in charge of public relations for the FBI, that Tolson would be accompanying the director. RJC, memo, "To: The Director, From: L. B. Nichols," July 31, 1952.

9. RJC, "Remarks of J. Edgar Hoover . . . September 27, 1952" (two unnumbered pages).

10. The event was reported in the Boston newspapers, including the *Globe*, *Post*, *Herald*, and *Advertiser*, on September 28, 1952. Clippings of the various articles are included in RJC.

declared, "one of the bulwarks of the American way of life."¹¹ Hoover, who considered the reputation of the FBI a supreme value throughout his career, must have been especially pleased by the archbishop's praise amidst so many local and national dignitaries. The remarks, together with a photo of the archbishop and the director, appeared in the November 1952 issue of *Investigator*, a monthly publication for the employees of the FBI.¹²

In addition to attending the dinner, Hoover consented to a request to give an exclusive interview to the *Pilot*, the archdiocesan newspaper. This interview received widespread coverage in the Boston papers, perhaps because it was the first such interview the director had given in two years.¹³ In it, Hoover linked the problem of the increasing threat of communism with that of increasing crime, stating that both were making "tremendous inroads into youth." The solution, he believed, lay in great measure with the churches, as he blamed America's chief ills on "spiritual starvation," a "lack of belief in God," and a breakdown of parental authority and morality. He offered Cushing as an example to youth of an "inspired and virile" leader, who could "instill in our youth a respect for God, for his fellow man, and for his country."

The themes contained in this series of remarks, speeches, and interviews were common to both Cushing and Hoover in public and private communication throughout the 1950s and '60s. They are representative of the Americanism of the Cold War period. Faithfulness to God, broadly acknowledged and worshipped in whatever church or synagogue, and the "American Way of Life" were its cornerstones and clarion call. Juvenile delinquency and the presence of communist agents and sympathizers were deemed to be the primary threats to American democratic values, and belief in God and the practice of religion were declared to be the obvious remedies to "Godless atheism" and lawlessness. Cushing and Hoover were among the most eminent spokesmen for this platform of belief.

While church membership was more and more considered an essential aspect of the "American Way of Life" during the 1950s, there were contemporary critics who questioned the depth of conversion and commitment of the masses. Will Herberg was among the most important of these. In *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, he wrote that both Catholicism and Judaism had become "religions of democracy," and

11. RJC, newspaper clipping, "Archbishop Lauds FBI Head at K. of C. Charity Dinner," *Boston Sunday Globe*, September 28, 1952.

12. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, November 10, 1952.

13. RJC, newspaper clippings, Boston newspapers, October 3, 1952.

that even the Catholic parochial school system now taught "the same basic values and ideals, the same underlying commitment to the American Way of Life," and so no longer posed a threat to Protestant America. His insightful essay included the assertion that the increasing mutual interreligious toleration of the time had been bought at the price of superficial conformity and a lack of theological integrity.¹⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr also acknowledged the national "increase of interest in religion if not a revival of religious faith," but he concluded that much of it was evidence of "a rather frantic effort of the naturally optimistic American soul to preserve its optimism in the age of anxiety."¹⁵ Along similar lines, Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle of Washington, D.C. told an interviewer, "Although at first glance piety seems to be everywhere . . . many persons appear to be turning to religion as they would to a benign sedative to sooth their minds and settle their nerves."¹⁶

Cushing and Hoover, however, appeared to have a less nuanced picture of the contemporary American scene with regard to religion, international threats, and domestic woes. Each saw in the other a representation of the ideal witness needed for the times – "a loyal subject in the City of God and the City of Man."¹⁷ While this conjunction of interests and views may be of no surprise to the historian of the period, their increasing collaboration might be.

Not long after all the obligatory thank-you letters for the 1952 testimonial dinner were exchanged, Cushing had an opportunity to personally intervene for the benefit of a local FBI agent. Introduced to the archbishop by Monsignor Minihan, Special Agent in Charge Arthur J. Marchessault, newly assigned to the FBI's Boston office, received the favor of Cushing making the arrangements for the agent's children to be placed in a Catholic school. As you might imagine, it only took one phone call from the archbishop to the sister principal to make it happen!¹⁸ Cushing must have gotten used to receiving visits from FBI agents, who were also available to render certain services to him. On more than one occasion, Cushing sought information from Boston-based agents for speeches that he was preparing.¹⁹ Before too long, Cushing would consider his relationship with Hoover to be close enough for him to ask the director for such assistance directly, and the

14. Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 258.

15. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Varieties of Religious Revival," *New Republic* 132 (June 6, 1955): 13-16.

16. Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 283.

17. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, December 21, 1957.

18. RJC, letter, Marchessault to Hoover, February 6, 1953.

19. RJC, letter, Kelly to Hoover, October 16, 1953.

director would reciprocate by offering this and other assistance with increasing frequency.

On October 16, 1953, after Special Agent in Charge J. J. Kelly had visited Cushing, Kelly wrote to Hoover in order to inform him that he had given the archbishop, upon request, a copy of an article that the director had written for the *Syracuse Law Review* on the topic of juvenile delinquency. The agent reported that he had also offered any other information that might help the archbishop in the preparation of his talks on this or related subjects. Cushing was appreciative and was quoted as having said, "You know in these parts if I quote J. Edgar Hoover, it's just like quoting the Pope."²⁰ At that same time, Cushing also offered, according to SAC Kelly, to serve Hoover and the Bureau in any way he could. Hoover quickly responded with a letter to Cushing in which he expressed his gratitude for the interest in his law review article and for his "support and friendship."

A note on the FBI's copy of that letter indicates that Cushing had been placed on the "Special Correspondents' List."²¹ From then on, the director was kept personally informed by his agents of Cushing's activities. Upon receipt of such intelligence, Hoover would frequently write to the archbishop, congratulating him on favorable newspaper reports, addresses given, and honors received,²² and wishing him well when illness struck.²³ The points on which they both agreed, especially with regard to communism and juvenile crime, were regularly reaffirmed and reinforced by means of their correspondence.²⁴ In 1954,

20. Ibid.

21. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, October 22, 1953.

22 Letters of congratulation were not sent casually by Hoover. Before congratulating Cushing on receipt of the "Humanitarian of the Year Award," given by the Welfare League for Retarded Children in New York City on December 7, 1959, a background check on the organization and its president was conducted by the FBI's New York office. RJC, memos, "To: Director, FBI, From, SAC, Boston," December 9, 1957, and "To: Director, FBI, From, SAC, New York," December 11, 1957. The FBI found "no derogatory data in Bureau files," and so Hoover sent a congratulatory letter to Cushing, December 17, 1957.

23. Cushing suffered from a variety of ailments over the years, including several chronic illnesses. The first of the notifications regarding an illness was received by Hoover on December 8, 1953, RJC, "Airtel," and was followed by letters from Hoover to Cushing, December 11 and December 28, 1953. In both cases, letters of appreciation were sent to Hoover by Cushing's secretary, Lawrence Riley, December 15 and 30, 1953. That Cushing himself did not respond was probably due to the severity of the illness. SAC H. G. Foster visited the recuperating prelate on March 9, 1954, and conveyed the director's "personal message and greeting," letter, Foster to Hoover, March 9, 1954. Also, see RJC, memo, "To: Director, FBI," July 8, 1959.

24. E.g., RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, October 31, 1957, regarding "youthful vandals," in which the director expressed his support for supportive remarks made by

the Boston office proposed, and it was accepted by the director, that Cushing be confirmed as a regular "SAC Contact."²⁵

From that point until his death in 1970, regular visits to the archbishop's office by designated agents of the FBI, and the monitoring of his writings, speeches, and activities, would continue.²⁶ Regular offers of special assistance while he was traveling, both nationally and abroad, also became commonplace. These included his being greeted at airports by agents, the offer of FBI cars and chauffeurs, and the services of the agency's "legal attachés" at the American embassies in Rome, London, and Paris.²⁷ On at least three occasions, the FBI also responded to threats made against the person of the archbishop.²⁸

By 1956, Cushing was addressing his correspondence to Hoover with the affectionate title, "My dear Chief."²⁹ By 1958, the letters would often begin, "Dear Edgar," and the director began to sign his letters to Cushing accordingly. Cushing, who in 1957 addressed Hoover as "My dearly beloved Friend,"³⁰ and occasionally closed his correspondence

Cushing which had appeared in the *Boston Globe*, October 24, 1957, newspaper clipping.

25. RJC, memo, "To: Director, FBI, From: SAC, Boston," November 24, 1954. The document, as it appears in the FBI file, indicates that the proposal was accepted and approved on December 10, 1954.

26. An example of the monitoring of Cushing's activities is indicated by a letter from Hoover to Cushing, December 29, 1954, in which the director praises the archbishop for a recent talk cited in the *Catholic Standard* (December 17, 1954), the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington, RJC, newspaper clipping, "Archbishop Asks Patriots to Welcome Ex-Communists." In the address, Cushing had characterized a "true patriot," and Hoover expressed his deep agreement with Cushing that patriotism must include a belief in "the principles upon which Government was founded by God."

27. E.g., RJC, Hoover to Cushing, July 29, 1958. A typewritten note on the FBI copy of the letter indicates that the attachés were instructed: "In the event he should contact you, I desire that every possible courtesy be extended to him." A report was sent from Rome to the director on the archbishop's progress in that city, August 18, 1958. With regards to the repeated offers of cars and drivers, e.g., memo, "To: Director, From: Clyde Tolson," February 3, 1959, it appears that Cushing consistently turned down the opportunity, judging it more appropriate to receive the hospitality of local bishops. FBI agents, however, often met Cushing on arrival in U.S. cities, extending their services and offering the greetings of the director, e.g., letter, J. M. Lopez to Hoover, November 24, 1959, which describes an agent's meeting with Cushing during a layover at the Chicago airport. The agent was careful to give a full report of his conversation with the cardinal to the director, as well as his assessment of Cushing's health.

28. RJC, teletypes, marked "urgent," "To Director, FBI, From: SAC, Boston," March 2 and 3, 1958; "To Director, FBI, SAC, Los Angeles, From SAC, Boston," March 28, 1963; and memo, "To: Director, FBI, From: SAC, Boston, June 17, 1965.

29. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, November 15, 1956.

30. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, December 21, 1957.

with the words "Your devoted friend,"³¹ always signed his full name, however, and was addressed in all the extant correspondence he received from Hoover by the current proper title, that is, "Dear Archbishop," "Dear Archbishop Cushing," or "Your Eminence."



Early 1950s photo of Cardinal Cushing with representatives of the League of Catholic Women. Courtesy of Archives, Archdiocese of Boston.

31. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, May 18, 1957.

Hoover and Cushing fostered their relationship by accepting invitations to be present at and address each other's constituencies. Hoover addressed the National Convention of Catholic Women, of which Cushing was the episcopal moderator, at their convention in Chicago in 1956,³² and he received the "Lantern Award" on April 22, 1957, at a Patriots' Day dinner in Boston, given by the Massachusetts State Council of the Knight of Columbus.³³ Cushing, in turn, accepted an invitation to address the sixty-third graduating class of the FBI National Academy, June 3, 1959, in Washington, D.C.³⁴ By this time, he had been created a cardinal, and his presentation proved to be another in a series of vigorous public defenses of Hoover and the FBI, which he had commenced the previous year in the face of what Cushing labeled a "smear attack" against his friend and the Bureau, initiated by "the Soviet fifth column."³⁵ At different times he asserted that "the very survival of this nation depends on the FBI,"³⁶ and that "the entire structure of American society depended upon the success of the FBI in its battle against Communism."³⁷ Hoover and other members of the FBI noted and were apparently extremely grateful for this spirited and continuing public support.³⁸

Perhaps Cushing's most explicit, enthusiastic, and even material support for one of Hoover's efforts, however, came with the publication of *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America and How to*

32. RJC, letters, Hoover to Cushing, November, 13, 1956, and Cushing to Hoover, November 15, 1956.

33. RJC, letters, Hoover to Cushing, April 24 and May 7, 1957. According to Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 108, Hoover, despite being a high-ranking Mason, was favorably disposed to the Knights of Columbus at least since the 1920s, due to their patriotic and anti-Communist stance.

34. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, March 24, 1959; AAB, letter, Hoover to Cushing, June 4, 1959, in which Hoover informs Cushing that a copy of the address given on the occasion, "The Need for Uncommon Men," was placed in the *Congressional Record* by Congressman W. J. Dorn of South Carolina (June 3, 1959). Cushing was accompanied by, among others, seven members of a Boston youth group, who called themselves "Cardinal Cushing Commandos." They were organized by Fr. Kenneth B. Murphy, pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church, Charlestown, MA, to study communist methods and to fight juvenile crime. They began by studying Hoover's *Masters of Deceit*. See RJC, various memos, letters, and newspaper clippings, regarding same.

35. RJC, "Address - Archbishop Cushing, Communion Breakfast, State Employees, November 16, 1958," sixteen pages; also, see several newspaper clippings, memos, and letters regarding the same. It was estimated that fifteen hundred employees of the state of Massachusetts, and the governor, were present.

36. RJC, newspaper clipping, *New York Journal-American*, November 23, 1958, "Cardinal Cushing Writes: Old Technique Used to Sabotage the FBI."

37. RJC, letter, L. L. Laughlin, SAC, to Hoover, December 8, 1958.

38. RJC, memo, "To: Mr. Tolson," November 15, 1958; telegram, Hoover to Cushing, November 16, 1958; and letter, Hoover to Cushing, November 16, 1958.

Fight It.³⁹ Though ghostwritten by the Research and Analysis Section of the Domestic Intelligence Division of the FBI, it was received as Hoover's own and certainly reflected his thinking. The book sold 250,000 copies in hardback and more than two million in paper. Its purpose was to convince Americans of the threat of communism, to explain communism's techniques of infiltration, and to stir up renewed enthusiasm for a defense of the "American Way of Life," especially through education in the founding principles of the nation, as Hoover saw them, and a rekindling of the religious spirit.⁴⁰ Cushing was among the most enthusiastic of its readers. In his letter of thanks for the copies that Hoover had sent, Cushing called it "the classic textbook and reference book pertaining to Communism," wrote a promotional statement for the publisher, and informed Hoover of his immediate plans to send a thousand copies to "the leading clerical, religious and lay teachers of the Archdiocese of Boston."⁴¹ Hoover responded by assuring the archbishop that he considered it an honor to have him as a "Special Agent" on "our team."⁴² This would only be the beginning of Cushing's promotional efforts of the book.

Cushing spoke extensively of the book on numerous subsequent occasions, including radio and television appearances; he saw to it that a translation of the work into Spanish was soon prepared; and he underwrote publication costs for the sake of even wider distribution.⁴³ At a meeting of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, on February 27, 1958, Cushing offered free copies of the book to any Communist or "fellow-traveler" who requested one and a copy at half price to any police official.⁴⁴ By March 10, Cushing had received a leather-bound edition of the book from Hoover, and he reported that he had already "disposed of two thousand copies of these books" and was receiving donations for the purpose of further distribution and subsidies.⁴⁵ In October, Cushing informed Hoover that he "thank[ed] God daily for [his] book."⁴⁶

39. New York: Holt, 1958.

40. See Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 343-346. Powers, 344, asserts that the proceeds from sales were "divided evenly among Hoover, [Clyde] Tolson, Louis Nichols, *This Week* magazine editor William I. Nichols, and the FBI Recreation Fund."

41. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, February 21, 1958.

42. RJC, Hoover to Cushing, March 13, 1958.

43. RJC, letter, Dana C. Pierce, the editor of the *General Electric News*, to Hoover, March 7, 1958, who refers to Cushing as one of Hoover's "agents," in his promotion of the book during a visit with employees of the company.

44. RJC, letter, L. L. Laughlin, SAC, to Hoover, February 28, 1958, and various newspaper clippings. The price of the book, as listed on the dust jacket of the first edition, was \$5.00.

45. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, March 10, 1958.

46. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, October 27, 1958.

On the morning of February 4, 1959, Cushing visited the headquarters of the FBI in Washington, D.C., and met with Hoover.⁴⁷



"On February 4, 1959, His Eminence Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, visited FBI Headquarters and was greeted by Mr. John Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI." Courtesy of Archives, Archdiocese of Boston.

During that meeting Cushing – who was then in the process of establishing the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle for the purpose, in great part, of sending American diocesan priests to South America in order to strengthen the Catholic church there in its struggle against communism⁴⁸ – suggested that a Spanish translation

47. RJC, memo, "To: Mr. DeLoach, From: M. A. Jones," February 3, 1959. There are also copies of several newspaper clippings, including photos of the director and His Eminence.

48. See James F. Garneau, "'Commandos for Christ': The Foundation of the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle and the 'Americanism' of the 1950s and the 1960s," diss., The Catholic University of America, 2000.

of *Masters of Deceit* would be of great assistance.⁴⁹ When the desired text was published, Cushing again became one of its principal promoters. Convinced as he was that communism was as much a threat to the Catholic faithful of Latin America as it was in the U.S., he offered to distribute the book to bishops, priests, religious, missionaries, and lay people in that continent.⁵⁰ In 1960 he proposed sending five thousand copies to the General Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM) for distribution.⁵¹ When Cushing found the costs of large quantities of the book beyond his means, Hoover utilized the services of the legal attaché in Mexico City in order to negotiate a better price for the cardinal. The cardinal was grateful and proceeded with his massive distribution efforts.⁵²

Meanwhile, the cardinal was also seeing to the publication of his own material on the dangers of communism. Hoover was, as usual, kept informed. The director had a summary made of a small booklet written by Cushing, entitled *Communism*.⁵³ This publication, however, did not cause the concern that his *Questions and Answers on Communism* did.⁵⁴ The cardinal had previously sought and received from the FBI some recommendations for this booklet,⁵⁵ but a study by the Bureau's Central Research Section revealed several errors, including a misquote from Hoover's book, and produced some political concerns about opinions expressed therein by Cushing. Among the latter are the opinion that the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 could not have succeeded without "substantial aid from the American Government," and that the United Nations was "the outstanding example of a popular communist front in the United States."⁵⁶ While

49. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, February 4, 1959. Hoover himself acknowledged that Cushing's promise to purchase thousands of copies of the Spanish translation (see Cushing to Hoover, February 20, 1959) "undoubtedly had a great deal to do in bringing about the contemplated action" (Hoover to Cushing, February 27, 1959). Also, see Cutler, *Cardinal Cushing of Boston*, 192.

50. RJC, Cushing to Hoover, October 8, 1959; letter, Laughlin to Hoover, October 7, 1959, wherein it is reported to Hoover that Cushing wanted five hundred copies of the book in Spanish for an unnamed visiting bishop from Latin America and others.

51. Archives of the Catholic University of America, NCWC/USCC Papers, OGS, Latin America Bureau (1928-1970), general Correspondence Files, Cardinal Cushing (1960-1961), letter, Cushing to Monsignor Paul Tanner, January 23, 1960. Also, see AAB, letter, Cushing to Hoover, September 30, 1959.

52. RJC, cablegram, "To Director, From Legat, Mexico City," January 19, 1960; letter, Hoover to Cushing, January 20, 1960; letter, Cushing to Hoover, January 23, 1960.

53. RJC, memo, Victor Emmanuel to M. A. McLaughlin, July 31, 1959, with report, entitled, "Summary of Pamphlet Entitled Communism."

54. Boston: St. Paul, 1960.

55. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, July 17, 1959.

56. RJC, memo, "To: Mr. A. H. Belmont, From: W. C. Sullivan," September 14, 1959.

not addressing the political opinions, Hoover did gently point out the errors of fact to Cushing in a letter of September 17, 1959. Cushing expressed gratitude, and the changes were made in subsequent editions, including a Spanish one, which was also meant to be widely distributed in Latin America.⁵⁷

It is also of interest to note that when Cardinal Cushing publicly expressed opposition to the visit of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to the United States in 1959,⁵⁸ Hoover sent a letter to the cardinal in which he mentioned that during a lunch with Richard M. Nixon, the vice president expressed the hope that the cardinal would read recent remarks of his that justified the visit and meetings.⁵⁹ There do not appear to have been any more public criticisms by His Eminence of the visit after this exchange.

Cushing was not alone among the members of the American Catholic hierarchy, both in terms of his vigilant anticommunism and in his admiration for and privileged communication with J. Edgar Hoover. As early as 1938, then-Monsignor Fulton Sheen was quoted as publicly praising Hoover and his work. In 1953, Bishop Sheen, by that time considered a special friend of the director and of the Bureau, spoke at the graduation exercises of the Bureau's National Academy. Furthermore, in 1954, after having volunteered his services to the Bureau, he was named a "Special Service Contact," according to his FBI file.⁶⁰ The FBI file on the Archbishop of New York (1939-1967), Francis Cardinal Spellman, demonstrates a similar convergence of political and personal interests.⁶¹

Spellman has been identified by one historian as "the political leader of Catholic anticommunism," and Sheen as "its prophet and philosopher."⁶² In light of the militant anticommunism of most U.S. Catholics in the post-war era and of their particular anxiety and concern over events such as the arrests and show-trials of Archbishop Stepinac of Yugoslavia and Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary, it is not

57. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, September 21, 1959.

58. RJC, newspaper clipping, undated, "Cardinal Explains Opposition to Invitation for Khrushchev."

59. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, August 28, 1959, with attachment.

60. Thomas C. Reeves, *America's Bishop: The Life and Times of Fulton J. Sheen* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001), 148, 203-206. Such contacts were "'prominent individuals who have volunteered their assistance to the Bureau.' . . . The program was created in 1941, discontinued in 1945, and recommenced in mid-1950 after the outbreak of the Korean War," *ibid.*, 246. See also, *ibid.*, 206-8, 218, 302, and 337.

61. Samples of the Spellman FBI file (536 pages) can be accessed through the FBI website, at <http://foia.fbi.gov/spellman.htm>.

62. Donald F. Crosby, *God, Church, and Flag: Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and the Catholic Church, 1950-1957* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 15.

surprising to have found important Catholic prelates taking leadership roles in the national debate, and aligned, publicly and privately, with figures such as Hoover. Cushing's public positions on these and related matters were thus hardly a rarity in their day.

By 1959, the language used in correspondence between Cushing and Hoover had become increasingly affectionate. In a letter to Hoover dated November 12, 1959, Cushing wrote, "You are the most thoughtful friend I ever had." This had come after Hoover expressed deep concern upon Cushing's hospitalization while in Ireland.⁶³ At about the same time, while suffering greatly from shingles, Cushing wrote to Hoover of God. It was, perhaps, the most explicit such reference in their correspondence to that point. "Let God be in your heart, eternity in your mind, and the world under your feet," he urged his friend, and in closing, assured him of his "love and blessings."⁶⁴

Though there is less material in Cushing's FBI file, comparatively, for the period of the 1960s than the 1950s, the tone of the exchange between His Eminence and the director continued to be friendly throughout. The paucity of material is a little surprising, however, given Cushing's involvement with the ransom payments for some of those captured at the Bay of Pigs fiasco, his close connection with the Kennedy family, and the continuing involvement of Cushing and the Archdiocese of Boston in politically sensitive issues, such as the plight of the poor in Latin America and racial issues at home.

In 1961, with John Kennedy in the White House, Hoover was quick to assure Cushing that the rumors about a bad relationship with the Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy, were unfounded. "Attorney General Kennedy and I have worked most cordially together," he wrote, "and we have not had a single difference."⁶⁵ Historians, however, tell a different tale.⁶⁶ Cushing, for his part, gave no evidence of any personal disbelief of such assertions by his friend, the director.

While never proselytizing Hoover, Cushing came to share increasingly more "Catholic language" and symbols with Hoover as the years passed, promising to offer Masses and mementos for him, asking for his prayers, and sending him prayer cards.⁶⁷ The two men continued to congratulate each other upon honors received,

63. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, October 19, 1959.

64. RJC, letter, Cushing to Hoover, undated. The apparent FBI stamp, dating the receipt of the letter on September 16, 1959, is crossed out.

65. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, March 8, 1961.

66. E.g., Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 363-373.

67. AAB, letter, December 13, 1960, wherein Cushing expresses his thought that Hoover might be interested in the former's new project – a seminary for "belated or delayed vocations." He sent along a pamphlet, describing the endeavor, with the hope that "some former F.B.I. men would apply."

occasionally console and assure each other in the face of criticisms, and exchange birthday greetings. Cushing continued to ask for and receive material for presentations he was preparing.⁶⁸ The most outstanding expression of the level of sharing on the part of Cushing, however, was expressed when Hoover celebrated his fortieth anniversary as the director of the FBI in 1964. For the occasion, Cushing arranged that forty masses would be celebrated by the priests of the St. James Society in Latin America, during a special period of forty days of prayer, set aside for the purpose by the cardinal.⁶⁹

Perhaps the two did not, in fact, always agree. When the *Boston Globe* published an editorial approving of the cardinal's plea for amnesty for Vietnam "war protesters, draft evaders and AWOLs in exile," on March 31, 1970, someone, possibly Hoover, wrote "nonsense" on the newspaper clipping that was put in the Cushing file. Nevertheless, upon his retirement only a few months later that year, Cushing received what was possibly his last letter from the director. In it, Hoover praised Cushing for his "outstanding efforts on behalf of the spiritual welfare of our Nation" and for his "noble accomplishments and contributions to the cause of freedom and democracy."⁷⁰

Perhaps these last words of Hoover to his friend and fellow crusader for the defense of the "American Way of Life" serve as a fitting summary of the understanding that both men, one an ecclesiastic and the other a public servant, had of their public roles and private beliefs in post-World War II America. There is much evidence of cooperation between the Director of the FBI and the Cardinal-Archbishop of Boston on behalf of what they, and many others, understood to be the united goal of the ecumenical defense of democracy and of religion in America. This suggests that Paul Blanshard, Joseph Dawson, and Harold Fey, and groups such as Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU) may have been more correct in their assessment of the level of cooperation between elements of the Catholic church in the U.S. and the government than either party was willing to admit in the cold war era.

68. RJC, memo, "To: Mr. W. C. Sullivan, From: J. A. Sizoo," October 9, 1961.

69. AAB, "J. Edgar Hoover, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1924-1964," undated.

70. RJC, letter, Hoover to Cushing, September 9, 1970.